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The six weeks I spent performing oral historical and ethnographic research in the villages of Nnindy, Uganda were full of numerous challenges and rewards, all of which informed and deepened my understanding of the region that became my home for the summer.

As this was the first time I was engaging in the fieldwork end of anthropological research, my first challenge was mastering (or at least improving upon) my interviewing techniques. At the start of my first interview, as I set up my tape recorder and with nervous excitement reached for a pen and my small flip notepad, I settled into my hand-woven circular seat in a small village hut and prepared myself for what I hoped would be an in depth exploration of a farmer's experience with hosting the community farm for her village. However, as I played back the tape recorder with my translator later that night, I was disappointed by the rather short 30 minutes of interviewing I heard, all of which was in abrupt question-answer format. Immediately, I realized that I needed to help the people I was interviewing feel more comfortable during our time together. I needed to resist the temptation to stick to the pre-articulated list of questions I had down on the paper in front of me and engage in deeper, more meaningful conversations. These people were not test subjects I could just extract information from; they were fellow human beings with whom I needed to make a trusting connection in order to be allowed into their lives.

The language barrier made this process even more difficult. I relied on my research assistant Dennis to translate interview responses. Thus, in order for me to pose meaningful follow-up questions, Dennis and I had to feel comfortable enough to challenge each other on the meaning of our questions and comments in hopes that no underlying messages were lost in

translation. Though the process was gradual, and I look forward to learning more and better techniques for this type of research, with every interview we carried out I felt more pleased with the results. As I began to learn common greetings and other phrases in the local Lugandan language, I used them to introduce myself and hopefully make the farmers I was interviewing more comfortable. Even (or perhaps especially) when I botched my meticulously practiced greetings and farewells, I began to exchange more and more smiles and fits of laughter with the people I was interviewing. Although the interviews were still formal in nature, I slowly began to learn the importance of abandoning a rigidly formulaic interviewing technique. As a result, I felt extremely rewarded by the more open responses I received during our discussions.

During my six weeks in Nnindy, I was also blessed to experience the extreme hospitality and genuine kindness of the Ugandan peoples. On a typical day in the field as Dennis and I walked to an interview, it was a rare occasion when we were not stopped and thanked for our work, offered a mango by a small child on the dirt path, or invited into a home for a warm glass of tea. Most of these people had no idea what my research entailed. They merely assumed I was there to help and did everything that they could think of to offer their gratitude. I was humbled and overwhelmed (and at times brought to tears) by the loving welcome I received. The strength and resistance the villagers retain in the face of adversity is also astounding. These people often did not have the same Western notion of punctuality, in that an interview scheduled at noon usually would not begin till about 2:00pm; however, they most certainly taught me the virtues of patience and perspective. Through my daily interactions, I came to understand the Ugandan value of generosity and the importance of community life.

I was also rewarded throughout the summer by witnessing many of the concepts of development I had studied in my classes at Notre Dame materialize in the village projects in

Nnindy. For instance, I learned that in order for development projects to be even remotely successful, they must be community-driven. Furthermore, the people involved in the projects must take ownership and accountability for these projects. While problems still remain with many of the agricultural development projects in Nnindy, I found that (as I had learned in my development courses) results were most successful whenever members of the community were able to address a problem themselves and work together to solve it before contacting the relevant development workers. Similarly, in listening to the villagers' complaints of the past agricultural projects, many fundamental concepts of development were reinforced, such as the importance of continual project assessment and monitoring, preconceived planning for project sustainability, and the importance of strong and fair leadership, both at the village and organizational level. The reward of witnessing the reality of these development models firsthand was invaluable. Not only will I be able to bring my observations and findings into the classroom now that I am back at Notre Dame, but also I can begin to formalize my own thoughts and reflections regarding approaches to international development.

As a part of this process, a final challenge remains. My experience in Uganda most definitely planted the seed of my desire to pursue research in the field of international development. I hope to study abroad in Switzerland this coming spring and perform an independent research project (perhaps investigating the views of and approaches to community development of international leaders in Geneva), as well as return to Uganda next summer to continue research and discussions with some of the same villagers I had the privilege of getting to know this June and July. My ongoing challenge is to figure out meaningful ways to connect all of this scholarly inquiry so that I might reap the greatest reward any researcher of development

could hope for – engaging in work that has the capacity to impact and improve the lives of the people whom I study.